

# Democrats Introduce Comprehensive Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act

Media Contact: Heather Wong, 202.225.3072

Washington, D.C. - Today, Rep. Zoe Lofgren and 111 of her Democratic colleagues introduced the VAWA 2005 Reauthorization Act, a bill that will reauthorize programs under the Violence Against Women Act and recommit America to ending domestic violence and sexual abuse. Among those joining Rep. Lofgren were all Democratic women in the House of Representatives, including House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi; Co-Chair and Co-Vice Chair of the House Women's Caucus Rep. Hilda Solis and Rep. Lois Capps; and Reps. Jan Schakowsky, Lucille Roybal-Allard, Louise Slaughter, Sheila Jackson-Lee, Carolyn Maloney and Gwen Moore, each of whom contributed significant provisions to VAWA 2005. Supporters also include every Ranking Member on committees of jurisdiction over VAWA 2005 (Judiciary, Financial Services, Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce and Education and the Workforce), and every Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee. The current Violence Against Women Act is set to expire on September 30, 2005.

VAWA 2005 is a comprehensive bill that not only reauthorizes current programs, but also includes many provisions that have not been dealt with in any other VAWA bill, including better economic security for victims of violence, increased protections for battered immigrants, enhanced protection of victims' personal information and new programs designed to prevent domestic violence before it occurs.

"VAWA has been a success, but the statistics on domestic violence remain alarming. Nearly one in four women will experience domestic violence during her lifetime. It is vital that we fight for a complete bill so that we can provide all the tools necessary to put a stop to domestic violence and sexual abuse," said Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA).

"Women should feel safe in their homes, and they should feel safe walking the street," said House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi. "I applaud Congresswoman Lofgren for her work to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. This bill sends a strong message: we will not tolerate violence, abuse, and sexual assault against women. I look forward to working with my colleagues to reauthorize VAWA this year and to fund it adequately every year."

"In reauthorizing VAWA, we must focus on the needs of all women. Although domestic violence is blind to race or ethnicity, racial and ethnic minority women and immigrant women, especially, face unique challenges to reporting and getting help for domestic violence. Our efforts to end domestic violence must address factors like cultural differences, linguistic differences and immigration," said Rep. Hilda L. Solis (D-CA), Chair of the Democratic Women's Working Group.

"Despite the successes of the Violence Against Women Act, we must broaden our approach to domestic violence. It is a health care issue of epidemic proportions, yet is dealt with almost exclusively as a criminal justice issue. Health care professionals are often the only people a victim has contact with outside of an abusive home, and they need the training and assistance provided for in this bill to end this cycle of abuse," said Rep. Lois Capps (D-CA), Co-Vice Chair of the House Women's Caucus.

"There is a perverse incentive in the U.S. for immigrant women to stay with their abusive spouses in order to preserve their immigration status," said Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL). "The VAWA 2005 Reauthorization Act will help immigrant women who need to leave their abusive spouses by preventing their deportation and providing them access to work permits and legal and social services."

"Economic security is essential to breaking the cycle of abuse for victims of domestic violence," Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) said. "I'm pleased Congresswoman Lofgren included the SAFE Act in her bill. The provisions are critical to empowering women to be financially free of their abusers."

"We have come a long way since the initial passage of VAWA. But there is no doubt we have a long way to go. The renewal of VAWA, along with its new provisions, will make great strides in helping millions of survivors find safety, security, and self-sufficiency. I also am pleased that my bill, the Badge and Uniform Security and Trustworthiness Act, is included in this important piece of legislation," said Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-NY). "This provision will make it more difficult for rapists and other attackers to pose as police officers and public officials in order to target women."

"In the past, present and future, VAWA has been, is, and will continue to be a critical tool to combat violence," said Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY). "It has helped decrease instances of rape by almost two-thirds since 1993, but still every two and a half minutes someone is sexually assaulted in our country. Not only do we need to reauthorize VAWA, but it should contain new language to guarantee rape victims the medical option of Emergency Contraceptives after they have been assaulted. We should do everything we can to help rape victims recover, not withhold important medical options from them."

"VAWA expires on September 30, 2005, so it is incumbent upon Members to support this very substantive measure. Our

proposed measure includes several very important priorities that have been deemed critical to Democratic principles, including additional protections for victims of human trafficking and a DNA crime registry – both of which will offer relief to young girls and women who have been abused," said Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX).

"The purpose of domestic violence shelters is to provide a safe place where people in need can be assured protection and support. Under the current HUD rules, the identities of hundreds of thousands will be exposed, making it possible for those who wish to hurt or even kill them to discover their whereabouts," said Rep. Gwen Moore (D-WI). "The SHIELD Act, as part of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, will make certain that the anonymity of victims of domestic violence and their dependents remains secure."